BRITZ of HEADQUARTERS

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ILLUSTRATIONS By RAY WALTERS

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CHAPTER XVIII.

The Glittering Dance.

Doris Missioner was affected much more deeply than she would have thought probable when she read the ardor-breathing proposal of marriage from Bruxton Sands. To say that it surprised her would be to set feminine intuition at a discount. She had known for a long time that Sands was in love with her, and on several occasions had been perilously close to the necessity of accepting or rejecting him.

Mrs. Missioner sent a reply to Sands with which, she told herself, he must be content for the present. When she had written it, she dressed for dinner rather earlier than usual, dined with only little Dorothy March as a vis-a-vis, and, after an hour or so spent in working out pretty problems with her youthful protegee, rang for her limousine and was whirled away to a dance at the home of one of her dear five hundred friends. Mrs. Missioner's arrival was an instant triumph, a royal progress. She laughed and chatted with men who adored her, and with women who would have done the same if they had not been—women.

Yet there was a monotony about it all to her, for although she was fond of society, she had seen the same faces, heard the same small talk, listened to the same music, and danced the same dances many, many times in the course of the season. Just when her vague wish for the unusual was shaping itself into a materialization of the grisly phantom, boredom, a little stir at the entrance to the ballroom heralded the arrival of a man who quickly drove the little drab devil of ennui from his perch upon Mrs. Missioner's satin shoulder.

The newcomer was a tall person, wearing the ordinary evening attire of gentlemen, with addition, however, of a showy turban that crowned his long black hair, like a wreath of snow upon a darkling mountain-side. It needed no second glance to tell Mrs. Missioner that they had already met. She knew it long before the Swami's dark eyes swung their twin search-light glance in her direction. Mrs. Missioner recognized readily the mysterious stranger of the opera box. It was the first time she had seen him since the night in which she discovered the falsity of her jewels. For a moment, the sight of his swart face and piercing eyes recalled the pang with which she had learned of the loss of the Maharanee diamond. So it was with a most gracious smile that she interrupted an introduction by her hostess and said:

"We have met quite recently," as she touched the tips of her white-gloved fingers to those of the Oriental. She went on: "You see I am more composed than at our last meeting; but then, I dare say, you were not troubled. Jewels, you know, mean so much to a woman."

"Some jewels mean more, Mrs. Missioner," said the Swami suavely. "I thoroughly understand the sense of loss—in fact, the bereavement that came upon you when you found that beautiful necklace was not what you had supposed it to be."

"I rather imagine," Mrs. Missioner returned, "that you are not unfamiliar with the fact that it was the loss of one stone among the many which really grieved me."

"You are right, my good friend," returned the Swami. "I will not pretend to be ignorant of the value you attached to the central gem—the Maharanee diamond. You are not alone—" He checked himself abruptly. "It was a stone which well might command affection from its possessor. Time was when devotion would have been the word."

They were strolling across the floor as they talked, and in a corner distant from the music the widow seated herself on a Louis Quinze chair and said, almost coaxingly:

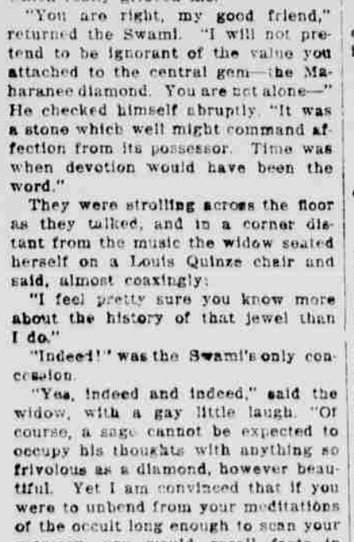
"I feel pretty sure you know more about the history of that jewel than I do."

"Indeed!" was the Swami's only concession.

"Yes, indeed and indeed," said the widow, with a gay little laugh. "Of course, a sage cannot be expected to occupy his thoughts with anything so frivolous as a diamond, however beautiful. Yet I am convinced that if you were to unbend from your meditations of the occult long enough to scan your memory, you would recall facts in connection with it that would be very interesting to me."

"May I inquire your reason for so thinking, dear madam?"

"It is a reasonable request on your part," she replied. "I remember my husband told me the stone had come



She Had Known for a Long Time That Sands Was in Love With Her.

from the treasure casket of the most beautiful queen in India—is not that why it is called the Maharanee diamond?"

"It would be difficult to explain the name of every great diamond in Hindostan," said the Swami evasively. "Since your husband gave you a history of the stone, surely you cannot doubt its authenticity."

"Oh, of course not," said the widow. "It is not in regard to its more recent history that I am questioning you. I think you know not only all the traditions hinging upon it, but that you are also conversant with its journeyings through your native land before it became the possession of the Maharanee from whom my husband bought it."

"Really, Mrs. Missioner," replied the scholar, "I can imagine nothing more delectable than to carry out your slightest wish; but we of the East have things on which to concentrate our poor intelligences that are too grave to make room even for so interesting a diversion as historical study among precious stones."

"Come, now!" urged the widow. "Please search your memory again. Unbend, Mr. Philosopher."

"Lest you think me churlish, I do recall that your famous diamond at one time was regarded with religious reverence by a large number of my countrymen. Naturally, being a Brahmin, I am not in sympathy with idolatry. Therefore, I cannot tell you what degree of sanctity attaches to the stone in the eyes of those to whom it once belonged."

Had anyone been standing immediately behind Mrs. Missioner's chair in such a position as to look into the depths of the Oriental's eyes, instead of gazing upward at them and so missing the angle of truth as Mrs. Missioner from her position could only do, he would have seen in those inky depths a gleam that belied the suave disclaimer of the priest. Mrs. Missioner did not see it, and it was with no sensation of discomfort, therefore, that she returned the Swami's bow as he moved away to join a group of people.

Mrs. Missioner, in the most comfortable way in the world, laid her hand on the arm of Curtis Griswold, and recrossed the floor to make up a set of lancers. She would have been uncomfortable, indeed, and even the self-centered Swami would have had a dim sense of something unusual, had they known that every word they exchanged was overheard by another swarthy man in Occidental attire who stood behind a screen. The second Easterner, he of the screen, gazed after Mrs. Missioner menacingly, and fixed his eyes the next moment on the broad back of the Swami with a look freighted with suspicion. He shrugged his shoulders after the manner of a Frenchman toned by long contact with Saxon restraint, and unpretentiously made a half-circle of the room until at a distance of a few yards he faced the turbaned scholar. His eyebrows lifted. The unspoken question was answered by an unnoticeable shake of the Swami's head. Further questions and answers flashed telepathically between those two pairs of vividly black eyes, and a little later the men themselves paused for an instant in passing—an instant that was not too short for an exchange of words.

"As I told you, Prince," said the Swami, "she was not a party to it."

"Your proof?"

"She believes her husband purchased it from Her Royal Highness—its namesake."

"And the other?"

"He is here."

"Watch him!"

"Assuredly."

"Are the disciples at work?"

"They must be finished by now. I expect the signal at any moment."

"It is well."

Griswold should have had one of the most enjoyable evenings of his life. Uncertain of her heart's attitude toward Sands, eagerness to avert the problem for a few hours made Mrs. Missioner seem more willing to be monopolized by the clubman than she would have been under any other circumstances. Who so debonair as Griswold when he led the beautiful widow through the mazes of the square dance, or floated with her about the room to the melody of the Gitana waltz? Who more worthy of the homage due a conquistador as he paraded the wealthy woman's acquiescence to his open wooing the length and breadth of the most brilliant and exclusive ballroom in Fifth Avenue? It was not to be expected that Curtis, under such conditions, could be anything but gay. He glittered. His conversation sparkled like the receiver of a wireless instrument. Little Dorothy March was so impressed by the exceptional gallantry and animation of the palpably delighted clubman—so deeply impressed, in fact, that it was long ere the memory of that evening faded in more recent recollections of chocolate nougats and Forrest Theater matinees.

Now, the question is, would Curtis Griswold have been as light-hearted if he had known that a letter addressed to him was intercepted at the door of this same mansion in Millionaires' Row by a swarthy gentleman of Oriental aspect, who had dazzled the unsuspecting district messenger with a tip of gleaming gold? Whether he would remains a question. Griswold never knew it, but Prince Kananda, after a swift persual of the note in a secluded smoking room, lost no time in letting the Swami know it, and it was worthy of note, though perhaps nobody noticed it, that within a very few minutes after their second meeting in the ballroom, Prince and scholar took their separate leave of their hostess, and sped northwesterly in closed automobiles that raced neck and neck far beyond the speed limit.

Little society reporters, in frocks of hodden gray, scribbled for the city editions of the morning papers the internationally important information that the ball of that evening was one of the most brilliant successes of the season, and that it was graced by the attendance of an Oriental prince whose departure was hastened by the receipt of a pressing cablegram from his royal father.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Mysterious Millicent.

Britz streaked from Sands' apartment to a dingy little den of a shop on the top floor of a downtown business rookery—one of the sky-scrapers of a quarter-century before. It was much more tedious to climb the five flights of stairs to the sixth story than to shoot in an express elevator to the summit of the Singer Building. But Britz was too hot on the scent to pay much attention to his fatigue. He ran up the stairs lightly, flung open a crazy outer door that creaked an announcement of his coming, and pushed a bit of paper toward a young man of modern physique and ancient visage who was working at a bench. The paper was the note beginning "Curtis dear," and ending with the first name of the mysterious Millicent. The anachronistic young man looked at it inquiringly through steel-rimmed spectacles.

"Rush a hundred copies of this, Burlen," said Britz. "I'll send for them in a couple of hours."

The detective seated himself on a stool behind the bench, and for several minutes watched the photo engraver at his work. His mind was not behind his eyes, however. He was busy with the possibilities unfolded by the little scrap of paper he had found in the Hindoo burglar's possession. The Headquarters man never was in a hurry to accept any clew at its face value; nevertheless, he felt he had at last something which, if not a direct link between his knowledge and his suppositions, would go far toward connecting them. That the note was addressed to Curtis Griswold he had little doubt. It required small effort of reasoning to conclude that the Easterners had gone to Sands' apartment soon after visiting Griswold. But this time, Britz had learned enough to convince him that the Brahmin scholar was as eager to get possession of the Missioner necklace as he was—to get the Maharanee diamond, anyway, if not all the other gems belonging to the famous string. By a patient, patchwork process, Britz had pieced together the tiniest details of the Swami's movements. He knew all about the scholar's presence in the Metropolitan Opera House on the night of the disappearance of the jewels, and he had made himself acquainted with the system of espionage maintained by the sage and his subordinates ever since that time. That system, he was aware, covered everyone connected, however distantly, with the mystery. It was apparent to Britz that he was working against men who, while not trained detectives in the Occidental sense, were fully as persistent in their quest as himself. There was no question the Swami had directed all the energies of the Easterners which the detective had followed interestedly throughout their various manifestations. Britz was convinced that he had the Brahmin priest to thank for his own kidnaping; and he was equally certain that the same little band of brothers had searched the homes of Bruxton Sands and Curtis Griswold. He was not given to attaching much weight to intuition, regarding that faculty as a pale and usually ineffective feminine reflection of masculine logic.

But something told him he must bestir himself even more vigorously than he had done to date, if he was to trace the Missioner diamonds before the suave, subtle men from the East could find them and put them forever beyond the reach of any Westerner. One thing was in his favor. Undoubtedly he had broken the Swami's line of communication by seizing the spies before they could report the finding of the Millicent note in Sands' apartment. He had a vague sense that the scrap of paper would be of immediate value as a clue to the Brahmin—that if he had not intercepted it, the scholar by now would have been close upon the discovery of the diamonds. It remained for Britz himself to ascertain the identity and whereabouts of Millicent before the Oriental prisoners could communicate with their chief. Those prisoners were safe enough for the present in the Tenderloin Police Station; but, although it was in the detective's power to prevent their immediate arraignment in the Night Court by a word to the precinct commander, he could not long keep them in cells. They were entitled to a speedy examination before the magistrate, and he was certain that unless their failure to report to the Swami should alarm that gentleman sooner, steps would be taken in the morning to have the prisoners produced in court. They were sure to be arraigned in Jefferson Market at next day's afternoon session, if not earlier. Britz felt that, once in their presence, the Swami, though he might be separated from them by the length of the room would find means to learn all they knew, to the last microscopic detail.

He must find Millicent that night. That done, he had little doubt he would be close to the Missioner jewels, and probably to the person who had taken them from their snug harbor in Mrs. Missioner's library.

"I'll send for the copies, Burlen," Britz said, as he slipped from the stool and started to the door, "but don't let the original leave your hands until I call for it myself."

The detective was so absorbed in his thoughts as he walked down flight after flight of the dark stairs that he did not see a pair of eyes gleaming from one of the lower halls. Those eyes were as black as the darkness that formed their background, and the Headquarters man would have been even more than ordinarily on the alert if he had seen them glistening in the remote recess. As the detective passed on toward the street, the eyes advanced along the dusk of the hall, and in the faint glow of a lowered gas-jet at the foot of one of the higher flights of stairs, there became visible behind them a man who, in most respects, was a counterpart of the two Orientals at that moment detained in the West Thirtieth Street Station. The owner of the eyes, while Britz walked downstairs, as quickly and far more quietly went up.

Britz turned his steps toward 300 Mulberry Street. In his own office, after a glance into Manning's room that showed him it was empty, he called Dr. Fitch on the telephone and made an appointment to meet him in two hours in the bar of the Holland House.

"It's one of the quietest places in Manhattan," said the detective, "and I want to talk to you very privately. They are not likely to know me there."

Britz pushed a button, and when a Headquarters attendant appeared, sent him for the Central Office man, whom, next to himself, he trusted most.

"Send down to Burlen's place in an hour and a half, Rawson," said Britz to the other detective. "He'll have a hundred facsimiles of a letter signed Millicent. Have as many men as possible get busy among the hotels. I want to trace the woman who wrote that signature. They will have to look through every register for a year past. It's got to be done thoroughly, and I want it done quickly. Here, I'll give you a list," and he hastily scribbled the names of a half-hundred hostelries of a class such as he thought the fair Millicent might patronize.

"What time will I see you?" asked Rawson.

"If I'm not back in three hours, I'll call you up," said the detective.

Then, having arrived at a pause in the pursuit of the jewels, he hastened to a Turkish bath, where, being a little weary from much metropolitan journeying and muscle-bound from loss

Was a Counterpart of the Two Orientals.

of sleep, he had himself baked, steamed, chilled, kneaded, and pounded into shape.

The great detective's indulgence in that luxury all unknowingly gave to the other side an advantage in the race for the Missioner jewels that well might prove fatal to his success. Long before Britz reached the hot-air room of the bath, the man with the glistening eyes who had passed him in the hall of the tumble-down loft building was at the door of Burlen's workshop, straining the angle of his vision to follow the photo-engraver at work. Those glittering eyes focused their gaze through the keyhole on a piece of paper which Burlen had fastened with thumbtacks to a board, and which, in the glare of an arc lamp, confronted a big camera with a powerful lens. Although the eyes followed Burlen as well as they could about the room, their owner was not so much interested in the artisan's activity as he was in the small white sheet of paper on which he could discern lines traced by a woman's hand. Patiently waited the owner of the eyes. He was of a race that had cultivated patience through the centuries. Soon or late, undoubtedly, the man inside would go from the bench beside that great white light to another part of the room. A few yards would suffice for the man with the eyes, and even while Britz still was talking to Rawson in Police Headquarters, Burlen briskly covered those dozen or so feet to get a chemical in the row of bottles in the rack at the far end of the shop. The man outside, crouching until he was little higher than an upreared cobra of his native land, slipped through the doorway, crawled across the intervening space between the threshold and the camera, whisked the Millicent note from the board, and as silently made his escape before Burlen had replaced the cork in the bottle. By the time Detective-Lieutenant Britz was enveloped in the fog of the steam room, that little note was in the possession of the Swami and Prince Kananda, and those worthies were studying it so swiftly and so profitably that ere Britz took his cold plunge, the sage and the Maharajah's son made a swifter, deeper dive toward the heart of the Missioner mystery. It was as a result of what they learned from Millicent's missive that the Swami and the Prince went separately to the ballroom of Doris Missioner's most fashionable friend. It was also in consequence of the information gleaned from those petulant feminine lines that the Swami found Mrs. Missioner's society so interesting, and that the Prince, before and after that tete-a-tete, experienced keen curiosity concerning the doings, characteristics, and state of mind of Curtis Griswold. The third result of Millicent's little letter and the Easterners' joint visit to the Fifth Avenue ballroom, was their dash in separate cabs to a bachelor apartment in a side street just off Central Park, where, shortly after their several arrivals, they were in close consultation for an hour or more with Ali, the supposedly devoted retainer of the rich Mrs. Missioner.

For the second note to Curtis Griswold that fell into the hands of the Hindoos—the one Prince Kananda intercepted at the door of the Fifth Avenue mansion in which the great ball was held—was written on a letterhead that revealed to Nandy and the Swami an address they very much desired to know. Had that address found its way to Detective-Lieutenant Britz as soon, it would have saved him much delay, and would have spared a large part of the city's detective force the necessity of a laborious search through Manhattan's hotel registers.

Burlen was one of the most astonished young men in lower Manhattan when, turning from his row of bottles, he found the note entrusted to him by Britz had vanished. At first he assumed he had fastened it carelessly and that it had fallen to the floor. A quick hunt showed him he was wrong. He extended his search to every part of the room, and it was not until he had disturbed the dust of ages that he realized the scrap of paper actually was gone. His sensations following that realization were not of the pleasantest. Britz was one of his best customers, and he knew from the detective's earnestness the note was of exceptional importance. It solaced him only in part to find on taking the plate from the camera and putting it through a developing process that the lens had done its work more faithfully than he. He held in his hand a perfect duplicate of the letter. That would not satisfy Britz, of course, but it was better than it would have been if the note had disappeared before the photographing was complete. Burlen hastened to subject the little plate of copper to the acid bath, and as the minute points of the halftone came out with gratifying distinctness, the young man rejoiced that he at least was able to produce the facsimiles the Headquarters man had ordered. Remorse spurred him so effectively that all the hundred impressions were ready when Rawson sent for them. Half an hour afterward, as many detectives were comparing the halftone prints with the signatures of all the Millicents in the registers of New York's more fashionable hotels.

Britz, as fit as a fiddle after his parboiling, walked briskly to the marble lobby of the Holland House and joined Fitch in the bar. That hotel is not patronized by the Bright Light set, one reason being that it sturdily repels all attempts at such patronage. Half a dozen men of undoubted fashion were in the cafe when Britz and Fitch draped themselves over one end of the bar, and began absorbing long, cold drinks in punctuation of their interested talk.

"We're getting warm, as the youngsters say," said Britz, and he told him of all that had happened since their last meeting. "Your young lady won't have to stay in the Tombs much longer, I'm thinking, unless we have a stroke of bad luck. I'm puzzled on one point, however, and that's what I wanted to see you about. What do you know about Bruxton Sands?"

"I know he's all right," Fitch replied. "One of the best ever."

"Known him long?"

"Several years. I was fortunate in the case of a brother of his, and that made me pretty solid with the whole family. Bruxton has done me several good turns."

"You think that square look of his is not a front, then?" inquired the detective.

"No," said the doctor, who talked more at his ease with the detective than he would have dreamed of doing with any of his fashionable patients. "He's the goods."

"Well," rejoined the sleuth, "I'm glad to hear you say so. I don't mind telling you he made me a little suspicious this evening. I must say that for an honest man his attitude was a little queer."

"In what way?"

"Well," said Britz, "he wouldn't let me see a bit of paper that might have helped me a whole lot in this matter; and just for a moment I began to wonder whether he was as eager to have the Missioner mystery solved as he pretended to be."

"There's no pretense about Bruxton Sands," said Fitch, very positively. "He does want this thing straightened out, and he wouldn't do anything in any way, if he could help it, to hinder you."

Britz then told the physician more fully how stubborn Sands had been in regard to the note the millionaire himself had taken from one of the Hindoo burglars.

"I'll admit it seemed strange," said Fitch. "But if you go on the assumption there is anything wrong behind it, you'll lose your point. Sands is as square as they make 'em."

"You don't think, then," asked the detective, "it is possible his infatuation for Mrs. Missioner would lead him to do anything to queer his rivals?"

"Most assuredly not," replied Fitch. "In the first place, he is not infatuated. Bruxton Sands is genuinely in love with Doris Missioner, and he is the kind of man who knows the sort of woman he wants. In the next place he wouldn't dream of doing anything underhand, even if he saw that the other fellow was undoubtedly winning out. He always plays the game."

"Well, maybe he does," said Britz; "but, from what I've observed in my journey through life, this love game is one that is played without any rules. I've known men who would take a million if it were handed to them on a platter, yet who'd go pretty close to a mix-up with the Grand Jury to cut out a fellow who was after the same girl."

"You talk as if your experience in the heart line were all second-hand," said Fitch, smiling.

"Never been in love in my life and never expect to be," said Britz. "But I have eyes in my head and ears behind them. I also know what women can do to a man's common sense even when they don't know they're doing it. The lady who gets the loot isn't always a party to the crime."

"Well," responded Fitch, "I won't undertake to pit my experience against yours; but there's nothing of that sort in this case. Sands loves Mrs. Missioner about as much as a man can. He was fond of her before her marriage, and most of us thought he'd win her then. I don't know why he didn't, but I do know that from the day he learned of her husband's death, he had been twice as attentive to her as before, and even in the days when she was the star bud of Auntie Paran's beauty show, his fondness for her was pretty noticeable. I remember particularly one Patriarchs' Ball when he grabbed every dance on her card and got her to sit out most of them."

"But he knows Griswold is trying to win her, too," said Britz, "and if he has any reason to think the other fellow has a good chance he might be tempted to put him down and out even if he had to go to such lengths as taking the Missioner diamonds, and then throwing suspicion on Griswold?"

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed Fitch. "I tell you, the man is dead square. He wouldn't do anything of that kind if Mrs. Missioner were the only woman in the world, as she really is, so far as he is concerned. You don't know Bruxton Sands the way I do. He may be short on conversation, but he's long on honor. He plays the game right out on the gridiron without any monkey business on the side lines, and you can just bank on that!"

Britz raised his glass and drank slowly, meditatively, until the ice chilled his nose. Then he sat the tumbler firmly down on the bar, faced Fitch, and said with an air of finality:

"If that's the case, Griswold's the man! He may have had assistance from Blodgett, but I doubt it. He's too foxy to trust his neck to a servant. As for Ali, I thought he might have turned the trick, but he didn't, because if he had, he and all the rest of that Calcutta bunch would be well on their way toward their heathen temples by this time. There is now only Mr. Curtis Griswold to consider."

Fitch looked at him with a perplexed air. He had his own thoughts in regard to the identity of the thief, but he recognized the detective's superior ability in solving the mystery and, being a scientist, he had an open mind.

"What causes you to suspect him?" he asked.

"I've had my eyes on that young man for some time," Britz said. "There were two or three things connected with the arrest of Miss Holcomb that didn't please me a little bit. I didn't like the satisfaction he showed when suspicion was directed toward her."

"Did he seem pleased?" inquired Fitch.

"More than pleased—he seemed relieved," answered the detective. "Maybe Donnelly and Carson did some real work, after all, without knowing it. If they hadn't arrested Miss Holcomb, Griswold mightn't have shown his hand so easily."

"Have you any other evidence?" asked the doctor. He appeared to be gratified by the trend of the detective's thoughts.

"Several things," said Britz. "One of our Wall Street men tells me half a dozen inquiries about Griswold have been sent to the financial agencies lately. I had that end worked up, and I found out Griswold had been bumped by a bear raid."

"Hurt much?"

"Pretty badly. He tried hard to sell a block of suburban real estate soon after that."

"These things are only straws, however," said the doctor. "Of course, we'll have to have much more substantial evidence before we can do anything."

"Well, for one thing," returned Britz, "I expect to know in a few hours just where the diamonds are. At any rate, how they were taken out of the city. If they are not in New York. I've got a hundred men working the hotels to find out, and it you'll come down to Headquarters with me in a little while you can see the result."

The detective stopped short in his words as Curtis Griswold entered the bar. The clubman went to the cigar counter, lighted a cigarette, and by the impatient gesture with which he snatched it from his lips and threw it to the floor, he betrayed the fact that he had applied the flame to the cork tip. His manner was nervous, his face slightly drawn, and his hand trembled as he took another cigarette from the case and once more puffed at it in his staccato fashion. He did not see Britz and Fitch, as they were at the other end of the bar. The detective's back was turned toward him, while the doctor's face was partly hidden by the Headquarters man's head. Fitch looked over Britz's shoulder at Griswold, and Britz himself watched the clubman's reflection in a mirror.

"Get me a messenger!" Griswold said to the bartender, and as the man pulled the crank of a call box, the clubman took a card from his pocket and wrote a few lines hastily upon it. Then he called for an envelope, and when the messenger came, he handed it to him with a bank note, with a few words spoken in a low tone. The messenger gone, Griswold called for a brandy-and-soda, gulped it down in a way that showed his state of nervous excitement and, still without seeing the doctor or the detective, hurried out of the barroom.

Britz gripped the doctor's arm.

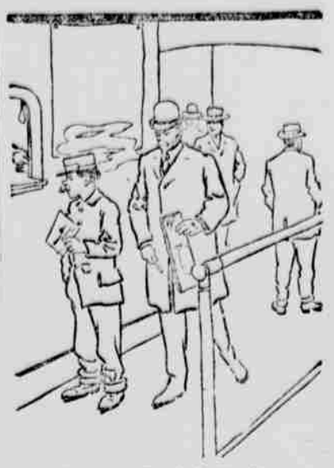
"Go after that boy!" he said. "Find out where he is going, and join me at Headquarters. Make it quick, doc!"

Fitch hastened in pursuit of the messenger boy. Britz walked with quick strides to the subway, where he boarded a local for Bleecker street.

The physician's pursuit of the district messenger who had carried the note from Griswold ended at the Thirty-third Street station of the Sixth avenue elevated railway. All Fitch wanted to know was the destination of the boy. That, though an amateur, had acquired so much skill from association with the famous Headquarters man in efforts to free his sweetheart that it required no prompting to look over the boy's shoulder as he stopped to buy a ticket. While fishing in his pocket for a grubby nickel, the messenger momentarily held the envelope in such a position that Fitch was able to read both name and address. The doctor hastily jotted both on the margin of a newspaper, and then he crossed to the downtown station, and in 20 minutes knocked at the door of the detective's room in Police Headquarters.

"This must be the woman," he heard Britz say to Rawson, as he entered after a sharp "Come in!" The detective's finger rested on a name in a list of a dozen or more Rawson had submitted.

"Hello, doc!" said Britz. "I guess we've found her. These are the full names of all the Millicents registered in New York hotels, and my man re-



Was Able to Read Both Name and Address.

ports this signature is exactly like the name attached to the note I found in the Indian's clothes."

"What's the name?" asked Fitch.

"Millicent Delaroche," answered the detective.

"That's the lady," answered the physician. "The same name is on that envelope Griswold gave the messenger. She lives in the—"

"Hotel Renaissance," said Britz decisively. "Doctor, I tell you we're getting warm. As the kids say, 'We're burning up!'"

A conference followed, in the course of which Britz, Fitch and Rawson elaborated a plan to ascertain whether the jewels Millicent Delaroche mentioned in her note to Griswold were the original Missioner diamonds, or merely gems the clubman had bought for her. To learn that fact was not so easy as it sounded. With weeks at his command, Britz could have gained the knowledge in a roundabout way, but he had no such time. There were not even days to spare; there were not even hours to waste. Britz knew as well as if he saw it in black and white that the Orientals, both of high and low caste, were centering all their subtlety, skill and ingenuity upon the possession of Mrs. Missioner's jewels—anyway, the Maharanee diamond—and he sensed the importance of anticipating them before the night was over. That application was based on the assumption that the contents of the Millicent note as yet were unknown to the more important of the Hindoos. Britz knew the men he had caught in Bruxton Sands' room could not get word to the Swami nor to Prince Kananda before the morning. He had taken care to prevent that by rushing a note to the captain of the Tenderloin precinct, requesting that the prisoners, instead of being taken to the night court, should be held at least for the morning session in Jefferson Market. His zeal led him to lose no time in heading off the Orientals, even with the burglars bottled up for twelve hours or so. Had he guessed he himself had helped to convey the letter from the Hindoo captives to their Brahmin master, he would have been twice as zealous, though it is doubtful he could have worked more rapidly than he did after his talk with Fitch and Rawson in the seclusion of his own office.

In pursuance of the plan arranged in that conference, Rawson went to the Renaissance and got from the management all that was known there concerning Millicent Delaroche. She was Mrs. Delaroche, whether wife, widow or divorcee the management could not tell. She had been in the hotel several months; she had one of the most luxurious suites in the big building, and she seemed to be liberally supplied with money. Her gowns were gorgeous, and when she went out, it was in an electric brougham she kept in the hotel's garage.

Mrs. Delaroche had few visitors. The most frequent was a man about town who sent many roses and huge boxes of bonbons to Madam's apartment. Did the management know him? Oh, yes. If his name was of any real importance to the interrogator, the manager did not mind telling it. What was it? Why, it was Mr. Griswold—Curtis Griswold, secretary of the Iroquois Trust company, and a leading member of the Stuyvesant club.

CHAPTER XX.

Kananda's Mission.

Kananda and the Swami, in the uptown bachelor apartment whither they sped from the Fifth avenue ballroom, bent about a table on which were spread various diagrams. Ali, Mrs. Missioner's servant, stood at a respectful distance. He wore a concerned look that intimated he had been subjected to some pretty stiff questioning by his masters. The high-caste Orientals paid little attention to him. They leaned over the table until their heads almost touched, studying diligently the papers that lay upon it, occasionally following the lines with pencils, and pausing to make hurried calculations on the margins of the sheets. At length the Swami leaned back and gazed fixedly at the prince.

"It is evident we're on the right track at last," he said. "Chanda and Gazim could not have done their work thoroughly."

"They didn't do it at all, when it comes to that," answered the prince. "Instead of finding only a loose end of the thread, they ought to have untangled the whole skein."

"However," said the Swami, "this note shows my original suppositions were accurate. The jewels were taken by the man who trod on the false diamond in the opera box."

"It looks as if it were so," Kananda replied. "The question is, where are they now?"

"The woman has them," returned the scholar.

"Unless," sneered Nandy, "she is beating our enterprising clubman at his own game. How do you know she hasn't sold them?"

"This note—"

"Oh, I know all about that," laughed the prince. "It is plain you have not given sufficient thought to the ways of these western women. If only you would take your head out of those